

Inner Thoughts



This play was created and performed by Rawan El Alawi, Dania Dahalan, Batool Sager, Salma Shammout and Zaheya Arafa from New Khan Younis Prep girls UNRWA school with support from their teacher, Amal Mukhairez. A recording of the play being performed by the actors is available here..



<https://youtu.be/PypRVgj0S7E>

The scene opens with a frozen image of three students. A girl enters talking to herself.

A: Wow! What a big house! What a beautiful garden! Why can't I have a big house like hers? Oh God! I love her large Barbie and her expensive phone. What if I were her....

[She freezes. The girl whom A was talking about comes to life.]

B: Yes! I have a big house with a beautiful garden... We spend our money on luxury cars, crazy parties and expensive vacations. But wait a minute! Can money buy health when it's lost? Our whole fortune couldn't help my mother when her body started to fail her. It couldn't ease any of her pains! I still remember her last minutes when she looked above her, then closed her eyes forever.

[B freezes. A comes to life.]

A: No, No, No! Thank God! I'm OK with my simple house. I have a beautiful caring mother! I'm so happy with what I have. *[A holds up a mirror and looks at herself]* Awffff! I look terrible! I wish I was prettier! That girl I see every morning at the bus station. What if I had her eyes, her nose, her body. She's very beautiful!!

[A freezes. C comes to life. She says her lines using sign language.]

C: Don't judge a book by its cover. I am beautiful. That's true. I envy you though. You don't have to lip-read all the time. I can't laugh at jokes. I can't hear music. I only hear noise. Do you know how it feels to be deaf?

[C freezes. A comes to life again and rubs her ears.]

A: My ears! I have to be thankful! I am beautiful, aren't I?

[A pauses and thinks]

A: That new classmate! She's getting all the attention at school. Everyone is looking after her... teachers, students, even our school counsellor... but why? Why?.....

[A freezes again. D comes to life.]

D: Do you think I am happy with this? I lost my house, my school, my friends. Have you ever lived in a shelter? Do you have friends who lost their entire families in one airstrike? Have you ever thought that one of your friends might be buried somewhere under the ruins, waiting for help that may never come?! Have you ever closed your eyes, prayed and waited for death?

[D freezes. A shakes herself and sighs deeply.]

A: Oh! No! My! What's wrong with me? Why would I want to be like someone else? Why not accept who I am? God, you are so beautiful. You gave me so many beautiful things, so thank you.

[A looks at B, C and D]

A: My friends, in spite of everything, you are stronger than I thought! I've learned my lesson. Thank you. *[A looks at the audience]* And you! Your self-worth is determined by you! Love the person you are and make a difference!



Amal says...

"A good play tells people something about themselves. The more we can reflect on the human aspects in a play, the more we can produce a powerful, viable piece of work. That's exactly what we had in mind when we decided to participate in the Hands Up Project playwriting competition. We wanted our play to be about some basic things about humanity so that's where we started.

Students from different school clubs sat together to brainstorm what the play could be about before putting pen to paper. They gathered a list of beautiful stories, characters, problems, solutions, messages and settings. However, we only needed one good story, so the students decided that the play should highlight world issues,

not only local ones, since it would be directed at a global audience, and it would be judged by judges from different parts of the globe with different cultural backgrounds. The students wanted their play to be globally understood so issues like refugees, wars, deafness, health, water and poverty were suggested as students believe that such issues matter to the whole world. Of course, in only five minutes we couldn't cover so many issues at once, so we limited ourselves to the ones which touched the students' everyday lives.

There was one main character and four secondary characters in the play. The main character of the play is not satisfied with the way she is, and envies others for what they apparently have. However, during the course of the play she realizes that each of them has their own problems, and that we shouldn't judge things simply by what we see on the outside. I think that the five characters produced a powerful performance, each one of them was a hero in her role. One of the elements which strengthens the play is the use of freeze frame and the moment when each character is brought to life is one of my favourite parts in the play. The idea of still images was suggested by Batool, one of the actors in the play, who was inspired by Nick Bilbrough's drama workshop in Rafah. Another innovative feature of the play was the use of sign language by Dania, who performed the role of the beautiful deaf girl. Using sign language seemed to be impossible at the beginning as no one at school knew this language but we visited a school for hearing and speech impaired people at the Palestine Red Crescent Society. There, Dania was trained in how to say her lines in sign language.

Playwriting is a great way to explore the inner thoughts and abilities that students may have. It's interesting to see how this experience has changed their attitudes towards each other and towards the world. I believe that they have learned how to express their local problems globally. They now understand that plays are created to be watched and heard, and the only way to make people hear you and watch you is to make yourself clear and understandable and relevant. "